



# Section 17 (Children Act 1989)

## Financial Policy

### Children's Social Care

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# Policy Governance

<b>Title</b>	
<b>Purpose/scope</b>	Section 17 (Children At 1989)
<b>Subject key words</b>	
<b>Council Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Protect care and invest to create a better borough</li><li>▪ Every young person and adult lives well in their community</li><li>▪ Openness, honesty, ownership, fairness, respect and involvement</li></ul>
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<b>Approver</b>	Darren Knibbs Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support

# Contents

<b>1.</b>	Introduction
<b>2.</b>	Legal Framework
<b>3.</b>	Assessment Process
<b>4.</b>	Meeting the Needs
<b>5.</b>	Authorisation and Monitoring
<b>6.</b>	Rights to Review
<b>7.</b>	Fraud
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Funding Resources for families or people with children
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Types and levels of financial assistance available, with provision method <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Direct work expenses</li></ul>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Additional background information: non-cash alternatives Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Community support Grant (CSG payments)</li><li>- Other non-cash solutions?</li></ul>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overarching policy objectives for financial support

This policy sits within the context of the following overarching policy objectives for financial support.

These include:

- Consistent Financial Assessment criteria to be applied where possible.
- Policies that are in line with and clear on the council's statutory requirements.
- Where goods are procured, they should always be through LA Procurement contracts.
- Cashless system wherever possible.
- If there are other support funds available these should be accessed in the first instance (e.g. budgeting loan or Grant from the Social Fund or Charity Application).
- Introduce consistency, equity and protection for staff administering across all areas of financial support.
- Policies tightened, with an exceptions process/panel in place.
- Agreed levels of authorisation for levels of support.
- Standardisation of paperwork.
- Sets out clearly the position, where we make payments in lieu of benefits.
- Corporate parenting principles – setting out what level of support we will provide as a corporate parent (e.g. particularly relevant for care leavers, staying put, and some aspects of Section 17).
- Single point of access, wherever possible.

1.2 This Policy is intended to provide guidance on the circumstances when it would be appropriate to provide financial assistance / support to families who are being supported via **Children in Need processes** under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

1.3 Parents and others with **Parental Responsibility** for children have a moral and legal responsibility for their support. National Government has defined the minimum income which is required for the support of children ("needs allowance") and the national welfare benefits system exists to ensure that family income is maintained at a sufficient level to facilitate the care of children. **A Short -Term Advances Scheme is now available for families waiting benefit claims to be processed through the Department for Work and Pension.**

1.4 It follows from the above that Children's Services do not have a role in supplementing family income and that any financial assistance / support to parents or those with parental responsibility must be limited to emergency / **exceptional** situations, which may 'include giving assistance in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash', **not** covered by national income maintenance

arrangements. Exceptional occasional payments may also be made to meet a special need of a child / or children which would not otherwise be met.

## 2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 establishes a general duty for local authorities to:

- 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need'; and
- 'so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families'

2.2 Under **Section 17 of the Children Act 1989**, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Local authorities undertake assessments of the needs of individual children to determine what services to provide and action to take.

2.3 A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is:

- unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development; or
- their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services; or
- a child who is disabled.

## 3. Assessment Process

3.1 Following acceptance of a referral to Children's Services, a social worker should undertake an assessment [no matter how brief] under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, with the assessment carried out in a timely manner reflecting:

- a child's age; and
- the needs of the individual child.

3.2 The purpose of the assessment is to:

- gather important information about a child and family;
- analyse their needs and/or the nature and level of any risk and harm being suffered by the child to inform a decision as to whether the child is a 'child in need' under section 17 [and / or is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm under section 47]; and
- determine the support [including financial assistance] to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes to make them safe.

3.2 The social worker must then establish whether the child[ren]'s identified needs should / could be met through:

- the national welfare benefit system; extended family; friends; charities or other voluntary organisations; or
- alternative discretionary funding schemes operated by / administered through the Council, for example Discretionary Housing Payments

3.3 If the identified needs of the child[ren] are to be met through Section 17, the social worker must record:

- the outcome of the assessment, clearly outlining the need that is to be met and how the financial assistance will meet the need established; and
- the way the financial assistance will be provided, for example: providing physical goods (such as nappies), shopping vouchers and / or travel warrants, with small cash payments being made only in very 'exceptional' cases.
- A request for financial funding should be completed and submitted to their relevant manager for consideration of approval: Team Manager up to £100 and Service Delivery Managers/Group Manager up to £500 or submitted to Resource Monitoring and Allocation Panel (RAMP) and once agreed uploaded onto the Child's LCS file case notes labelled 'Section 17'.

3.4 The level and duration of the financial assistance provided will be governed by the criterion and rates outlined in Appendix 1.

## **4. MEETING THE NEEDS**

### **Occasional Section 17 Payments for those with Parental Responsibility:**

4.1 For the reasons outlined above, section 17 payments to those with parental responsibility will never take the form of a regular allowance. They will rather be occasional payments designed to overcome a cash crisis, which would otherwise have an unacceptable impact on the care of the children in the family. Exceptionally occasional payments may also be made to meet a special need on the part of a child, which would not otherwise be met. However, consistent with the wording of section 17, such payments:

- will be "exceptional" and will consist of the minimum amount required to reasonably meet the assessed need; and
- consideration must be at Team Manager level and the basis of the decision (including any amounts) must be clearly noted on the relevant case file and authorised for approval using the appropriate channels (for all spend exceeding £500 in total this would be through RAMP).

### **Occasional Section 17 Payments for those without Parental Responsibility:**

- 4.2 Section 17 can also be used to support extended family members and family friends to assist in the care of children (where they have made a private arrangement) at a time of crisis.
- 4.3 In such circumstances the arrangements for caring arrangements as an alternative to remaining in the child/children's birth parent's care are made between the parents and the carers and the role of Children's Service is limited to assisting the parties to make the arrangements and to advise regarding benefit claims etc. While most "kinship care" arrangements are established without Children's Service involvement, there are occasions when financial assistance is required to support such arrangements as an alternative to being cared for by the Local Authority. As children who are cared for through such arrangements are not care experienced under any legal order, any such exceptional support is provided under Section 17.
- 4.4 Generally, family or friend carers will obtain the finance necessary to support the child from the parents or by claiming welfare benefits and, in these circumstances Section 17 assistance will be limited to occasional payments designed to overcome a cash crisis, which would otherwise have an unacceptable impact on the care of children. Exceptionally occasional payments may also be made to meet a special need on the part of a child, which would not otherwise be met. However, consistent with the wording of Section 17, such payments:
- will be "exceptional" and will consist of the minimum amount required to reasonably meet the assessed need; and
  - consideration must be at Team Manager level and the basis of the decision (including any amounts) must be clearly noted on the relevant case file and authorised for approval using the appropriate channels (for all spend exceeding £500 in total this would be through RAMP).

### **Exceptional 'Regular' Payments [i.e. to those with No Recourse to Public Funds]:**

- 4.5 Normally Section 17 assistance is limited to occasional payments as outlined above. However, in very exceptional circumstances, regular payments may be made as follows:
- to family / friends and carers whose income is below the specified "needs allowance" for the family and child[ren] and
  - who are not entitled to claim welfare benefits to supplement this.

It should be noted that the maximum amount for a regular payment is that which will increase family income to the specified "needs allowance".

- 4.6 Consideration of the need for regular payments must be via the Service Delivery Manager and subsequently at RAMP wherever the cumulative spend exceeds £500. Any payment arrangement must be reviewed via the three-monthly reporting mechanism intervals. The basis of the decision (including the amounts) must be clearly noted on the relevant case file through case notes even where the cost is less than £500.
- 4.7 The overall spread sheet of financial assistance assessed as needed (to address specific needs for a child / family) should be reviewed by the SDM, Service Improvement and Efficiency on a monthly basis for budget monitoring and challenge and oversight to identify those receiving 'on-going 'regular' (i.e. 12 weeks or more) payments and / or high-level financial packages). The frequency of this consideration could subsequently move this to bi-monthly or quarterly.

## **5. AUTHORISATION AND MONITORING**

- 5.1 Authorisation levels should reflect the scheme of delegation and officers and managers must be aware that they can only agree budget spend in line with their delegated power. As noted at 4.7 above, there should be overall budget monitoring and challenge of those receiving 'on-going regular' payments. Cash payments should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Rates paid per week should reflect and not exceed those used under the Community Support Grant scheme/DWP. Many Team Managers possess GPC Cards which are to be used in line with their authorised limits only.

<b>Authorisation Levels</b>	
<b>Team Managers</b>	<b>£100</b>
<b>SDM/Group Managers</b>	<b>Up to £500</b>
<b>RAMP</b>	<b>Over £500</b>



## **Monitoring Process**

- The following situation should be considered by RAMP - ongoing awards that are over a period of more than 4 weeks.
- Payments made in situations where state benefits will be due.
- In recognition of the difficulty of covering all potential payments through this policy, but wanting to provide more challenge and rigor, whilst also supporting staff an exceptions panel will be appointed.
- This will meet monthly and review and approve or reject all applications.

## **6. Rights of Review**

- 6.1 There will be no rights of review for Section 17 assistance as the decision is made subject to a social work assessment.
- 6.2 Where the individual or family is not satisfied with the outcome of their request for assistance, they have the right to register a formal complaint through the Council's Complaints Procedure or to contact the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate a claim of maladministration.

## **7. Fraud**

- 7.1 Telford and Wrekin Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its form. Where it is alleged, or the authority suspects that circumstances have been falsely represented or a false statement made, creating an offence under the Fraud Act 2006, the matter will be investigated. If fraud is found to have occurred, action will be taken including, if appropriate, criminal proceedings.

# CHARITIES & ORGANISATIONS

Charites/Organisations	Web Page Link	Further information
<b>Buttle UK (Children in crisis)</b>	<a href="#">Home - Buttle UK</a>	Buttle UK is a charity dedicated to helping children and young people in the UK who have experienced crisis, living in financial hardship and dealing with multiple challenging social issues. We provide support designed to improve emotional, educational and social outcomes through our Chances for Children grants and, for some children whose home environment is disruptive and chaotic, grants which allow them to go to boarding school.
<b>BBC Children in Need</b>	<a href="#">BBC Children in Need Emergency Essentials Programme - Family Fund Business Services (familyfundservices.co.uk)</a>	BCC Children in Need Emergency Essential Programme supports children and young people who are facing exceptionally difficult circumstances and is delivered by family Fund Business Services. The programme provides items that meets a child's most basic needs such as a bed to sleep in, a cooker to provide a hot meal and other items or services critical to a child's wellbeing.  All applications must be made a registered referrer
<b>Benefit Calculators</b>	<a href="#">Benefits calculators - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>	You can use an independent, free and anonymous benefits calculator to check what you could be entitled to. This will give you an estimate of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the benefits you could get</li> <li>• how much your benefit payments could be</li> <li>• how your benefits will be affected if you start work or increase your hours</li> <li>• how your benefits will be affected if your circumstances change - for example, if you have a child or move in with your partner</li> </ul>
<b>Cerebra</b>	<a href="#">Cerebra - Working with you and your amazing child</a>	Working wonders for children with brain conditions that result in complex medical, educational and social support needs.
<b>Cost of Living advice</b>	<a href="#">Cost of living - Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</a>	Find help, support and advice during the cost of living crisis ... Includes financial support and advice guides.
<b>Discretionary Housing</b>	<a href="#">Introduction - Discretionary Housing</a>	Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are extra payments that we

<p><b>Payment</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Payment (DHP) - Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</a></p>	<p>may be able to pay if your Housing Benefit or Housing Costs paid under Universal Credit doesn't cover your full rent and you are struggling to afford to pay the difference.</p> <p>A DHP cannot cover ineligible service charges - such as charges for heating, water or food; it also cannot cover Council Tax. However, if you receive Council Tax Reduction (formerly called Council Tax Support) or Universal Credit and are struggling to afford the shortfall between this reduction and your Council Tax charge, we may be able to give you some short-term assistance through our Council Tax Hardship scheme, which you can apply to via the DHP application.</p>
<p><b>52 Lives</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Welcome to 52 lives - 52 Lives (52-lives.org)</a></p>	<p>52 Lives works with thousands of children every year through our School of Kindness. We run free Kindness Workshops for primary schools, which aim to empower children by helping them realise that the little choices they make every day have the power to change the world, while improving their own physical and mental health at the same time</p> <p>Kindness Fund, provides small grants to children with amazing ideas for spreading kindness in their school or community, as well as a range of free lesson plans and resources for teachers.</p>
<p><b>Family Action</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Family Action's Grants Service: Financial support since 1869 (family-action.org.uk)</a></p>	<p><b>Welfare Grant:</b> aim to help prevent an immediate crisis from spiraling and threatening the stability of families and individuals. Welfare grants are an integral part of our whole family approach to finding solutions for those who need it the most. Coupled with emotional and practical support, grants help us to create a safety net for the most vulnerable members of our society. (Eligibility applies)</p> <p><b>Education grant:</b> support parents or carers who are looking to unlock their educational potential by participating in further education.</p> <p>Many individuals face challenges during their time at college which may mean they're unable to complete their studies and pursue their future career goals. For others, their life situation may change meaning they need to re-train to gain employment that suits their family life.</p> <p><b>Family Action's Educational Grants Programme</b> helps individuals to begin their studies as well as supporting existing students to</p>

		continue and complete their studies.
<b>Family Fund helping disabled children</b>	<a href="#">Family Fund</a>	Number of grant programmes available for families across the UK who are raising a disabled or seriously ill, child or young person aged 17 or under).
<b>Fashion &amp; Textile Childrens Trust</b>	<a href="http://fctt.org.uk">Fashion &amp; Textile Children's Trust (fctt.org.uk)</a>	<p>The Fashion &amp; Textile Children's Trust provides education and wellbeing grants to support children (0-18 years) whose parents or guardians work or have recently worked (within the last 9 years) in the UK fashion and textile industry. This includes retail, head office, manufacturing, wholesale, design, distribution, bridal wear, menswear, knitwear, supermarkets, soft furnishings etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants starting at £250 can pay for an everyday item like a new school uniform or a specialist item like mobility equipment. It could also help with a household cost which impacts on the child's life, like a broken washing machine or fridge.</li> <li>• Through the <a href="#">Rehousing Grant</a> programme, the Trust provides funding to families who are facing unexpected additional rehousing costs as a result of any of the following: Fleeing domestic abuse; Recently offered a house after an unsettled housing situation; Required to move because the property no longer meets the needs of the family, e.g. disability or health needs; Required to move by the landlord or council.</li> <li>• Through the <a href="#">Kinship Care Grant</a> programme, the trust provides funding to help families who are raising children of relatives or friends. Grants can help to cover set-up costs for the children or support with ongoing health and wellbeing needs.</li> <li>• Through the <a href="#">Therapy Grants</a> programme, the trust provides funding for a wide range of therapies to support a child's physical health, mental wellbeing and learning needs, including Speech and language therapy; Physiotherapy; Psychotherapy (e.g. talking therapies or counselling); Play therapy; Art therapy; Music therapy.</li> <li>• Through the <a href="#">Specialist Equipment</a> programme the trust provides funding for items to support children with complex health needs</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through the <a href="#">Grants for when a parent is ill</a> programme the trust provides funding for families where a parent or carer is suffering from long term physical or mental health conditions and income has been reduced as a result.</li> </ul> <p><b>Deadline:</b> Applications can be made at any time</p>
<b>Household Support Fund</b>	<a href="#">Introduction - Household Support Fund - Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</a>	For residents who are suffering exceptional financial difficulties. Residents can apply for a small grant, usually in the form of a supermarket voucher or an energy voucher/payment to help with the cost-of-living crisis. Currently only have funding confirmed until 31 March 2024.
<b>Interfaith Organisation</b>	<a href="http://www.interfaithtelford.org/">http://www.interfaithtelford.org/</a>	Emergency out of hours food parcels
<b>Lady Foresters Trust (01952 884318)</b>	<a href="#">The Lady Forester Trust</a>	People who live in the county of Shropshire who are sick, have a disability or are recovering from an illness or injury. There is a preference for people who live in the ancient borough of Wenlock (now part of Much Wenlock). Grants for items or services that are not readily available to them from other sources, such as from the Local Authority.  Don't accept applications directly from individuals looking for support - work with partner organisations to apply for grants on someone's behalf
	<a href="#">Turn2us Grants Search</a>	Free and easy-to-use Benefits Calculator and Grants Search tools to check what benefits you might be able to claim and what grants you might be able to apply for.  Don't accept applications directly from individuals looking for support - work with partner organisations to apply for grants on someone's behalf.
<b>Salvation Army (01952 620263)</b>	<a href="#">The Salvation Army</a>	Provide support with <a href="#">food banks</a> <a href="#">shelter</a> , <a href="#">employment</a> and <a href="#">debt advice</a> and see first-hand how the cost of living crisis is pushing people into a poverty spiral.
<b>Shropshire Welfare Trust (01952 293775)</b>	<a href="#">Shropshire Welfare Trust Group of Charities</a>	Awards grants to organisations and individuals to assist those who have a serious health problem or disability. To qualify, a grant must be used for the benefit of persons living in Shropshire with a low income and little capital.

<b>Telford Crisis Support</b> <b>(01952 586646)</b>	<a href="#">Telford Crisis Support</a>	<p>A range of service support; all free of charge to the community in Telford &amp; Wrekin and the surrounding areas of rural Shropshire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emergency food support for those in financial crisis</li> <li>• practical support for babies and toddlers, equipment, clothing &amp; toiletries</li> <li>• pre-loved school uniform for all, saving money &amp; the environment.</li> <li>• community project</li> <li>• well-being support services for individuals &amp; families</li> <li>• signposting and link worker support</li> <li>• winter coats and shoes</li> </ul>
<b>Telford Energy Advice</b>	<a href="#">Marches Energy Agency – Charity energy specialists (mea.org.uk)</a>	<p>Telford Energy Advice (TEA) is your local energy advice service.</p> <p>They offer free and impartial support on all domestic energy efficiency matters including the best deal on gas and electricity, accessing grants for home energy efficiency/heating improvements and advice about keeping warm at home.</p> <p>If you or someone you know has concerns about energy, contact the friendly local team at TEA today on <b>0800 677 1952</b> or email <a href="mailto:advice@mea.org.uk">advice@mea.org.uk</a>. Have access to small grants that can help with energy efficiency / warmth etc.</p>
<b>Telford Warm Hubs</b>	<a href="#">Live Well Telford</a>	<p>Warm and welcoming community warm space open across Telford &amp; Wrekin Community Hubs available to the public to access</p>
<b>For Women</b> <b>The Smallwood Trust:</b> (small grants and support for women on low incomes who are trying to overcome financial difficulties)	<a href="#">Grants to Individuals   Smallwood Trust</a>	<p>To help respond more immediately and effectively to women who need support the most, by adopting a more targeted approach to grants for individuals programme in alignment with the new strategic plan</p>

# EMERGENCY WELFARE ASSISTANCE

(Discussion to take with Team Manager before making application)

<p><b>Emergency Welfare Assistance:</b></p> <p><b>Contact details:</b> email address <a href="mailto:DHP@telford.gov.uk">DHP@telford.gov.uk</a> (Tel: 383858)</p>	<p><a href="http://egovhub.net">Emergency Welfare Assistance (egovhub.net)</a></p>	<p>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council's Emergency Welfare Crisis Assistance scheme is designed to provide help to residents who have experienced some type of crisis, disaster or unexpected emergency and need assistance or support to keep them or their family safe and well and cannot afford the assistance that they need. i.e., topping up gas/electricity meters, white goods such as cookers or fridge, support with food parcels and much more</p> <p>Also provide gas and electric on pre-payment meters if customers are struggling financially, but we do have the Household Support Fund for those that are bill payers and are in debt with their energy bills. <a href="#">Introduction – Household Support Fund – Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</a></p> <p>All white goods and sofas are second hand with a 6-month warranty and beds are new. All applications are subject to income and expenditure checks. We don't do furniture such as wardrobes and draws, curtains, carpets, table and chair. No cash payments are granted.</p>
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To make an application online, please choose the option below that best describes your current circumstances: -

I need essential goods or furniture to help me set up my own home after living in an institution (e.g. leaving care, or prison) or have been housed in temporary accommodation to avoid becoming homeless (e.g. a hostel)

I, or someone I look after, needs essential goods or furniture, without which we may have to move out of our home and into some form of institution.

I need essential items such as furniture, goods or clothing to help set up a new home because I have experienced domestic abuse.

I have suffered a crisis, emergency or disaster and I need essential goods, furniture, clothing, or other items to keep me or my family safe and well.

I urgently need help to pay for gas or electricity so that I can heat my home or cook food for me or my family.

- Completion of Application Form takes approx 20 minutes.
- Applications will be hopefully looked at the same day, but decisions may take longer if we need more information.
- Urgent request for beds and white goods should be submitted before 1pm, to be considered that day, but we try and call all customers as long as they have submitted an application before 4pm.
- Also do removals and these applications need to be submitted at least 3 days before the move to allow our supplier to review the jobs and booked the removal in.

Washing Machine around £150.00 to £165.00 – fitting is £20.00

Fridge Freezer – depending on size - £95 (small) £120 (Med), £140 (Large) £175.00 (EX-Large)

Undercounter Fridge £85.00

*White goods prices are subject to change*

Single beds & Mattress - £90.00 delivered.  
Double bed & Mattress - £115.00 delivered.  
Single mattresses only £65.00 delivered.  
Double mattresses £85.00 delivered.

*Bed contract is subject to change from next July 2024*

Cooker -Electric only £140.00  
Fitting - £30.00  
Delivery - £10.00.

Delivery of everything is £10.00



## Direct Work Expenses

For direct work expenses, alternatives to cash payments should be explored wherever possible.

Direct work Expenses - All payments are subject to a maximum level per child				
Direct work expenses	£10.00	Per child	Cash (although other alternatives should be explored)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be agreed in advance by the Social Worker's Team Manager.</li> <li>• Payments should only be made to support on-going direct work with a child/young person.</li> <li>• Activities should support outcomes.</li> </ul>

Family Time Expenses - All payments are subject to a maximum level per child				
Daytime only Family Time	£10.00	1st child	Cash (although other alternative should be explored)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Time expenses should be agreed in advance by the Social Worker's Team Manager</li> <li>• Payments should only be made to support Family Time with a child/young person if participating in activities/outings or a meal out/refreshment (healthy options only)</li> </ul>
	£8.00	2nd child		
	£5.00	Further children		
Overnight Family Time	£10.00	Per night for 1st child		
	£8.00	Per night for 2nd child		
	£5.00	Per night for further children		
Car mileage for Family Time	£0.30	Per mile		Mileage based on AA route planner
Public transport	Bus pass/train pass as appropriate			

### **Appendix 3 – Additional background information: non-cash alternatives Travel**

- Bus request for daily/weekly passes to be made through the payment form on protocol for Safeguarding Finance to action. Safeguarding Finance hold bus vouchers which can be exchanged on the bus
- Train passes to be made through the payment form and Senior/Business Support Officer to action.
- Form of Asda grocery vouchers to be requested via the payment form on protocol which are ordered directly by Senior/ Business Support Officer, paid for on the purchase card and then delivered to the service. They are then activated upon receipt, as until that point they have no value.